

LUDLAM (R.)

WOMAN AND HOMEOPATHY.

ANNUAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

OF THE

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF HOMEOPATHY,

AT BOSTON, JUNE 8, 1870.



BY R. LUDLAM, M. D.,
OF CHICAGO.

BOSTON:

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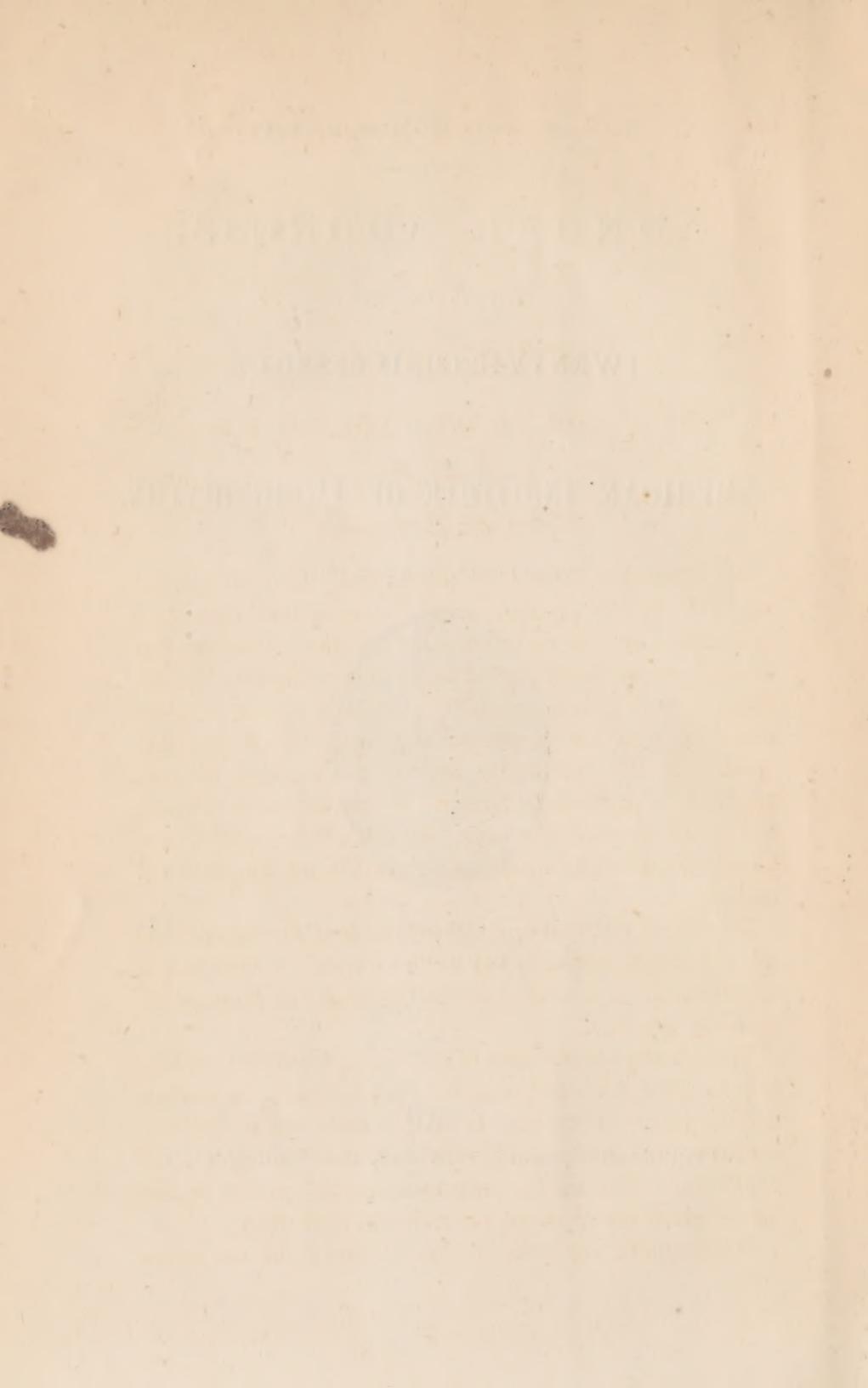


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ANNUAL ADDRESS,

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Woman and Homœopathy.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: It is evident that we have reached a period in the history of this body when questions of medical controversy are no longer paramount, and in which we are not compelled to act on the defensive. In this famous city of Boston, especially, it would be a work of supererogation to attempt a popular address in behalf of homœopathy. In this latitude, the day and the necessity for such appeals have passed away forever. Where the whole audience, and almost the entire community, are either under conviction or already converted, a revival sermon would be inappropriate and useless.

By your leave, therefore, I will address myself to the consideration of a more agreeable and profitable topic. I will speak of the *Mutual Relations existing between Woman and the Homœopathic System of Medicine.*

There is no better evidence of civilization, the world over, than is to be found in the care bestowed upon the health, the comfort, and the welfare of woman. If modern habits and usages have multiplied the diseases and physical frailties of the sex, it is one of the grandest of earthly compensations that modern science has mitigated their severity, and extracted their sting.

When we reflect upon the influence exerted to this end by the

system we represent and practise, it is sufficient to temper the present occasion with the most unbounded enthusiasm. Through it, what blessings have descended, directly and indirectly, into every well-ordered household! Where shall we look for the mother, or wife, or sister who has not been benefited thereby? Through its kindly and genial operation, what multitudes have escaped bodily pain and mental anguish. If "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," has He not so modified our curative agencies as to adapt them to the most refined susceptibilities of our most sensitive patients? And is it not something for which to be thankful, that our labors and our prescriptions may effect such wonders without the risk of working any possible harm?

There is no need of argument to demonstrate the admirable fitness of our remedies for the treatment of any especial class of diseases. Every practitioner before me has had daily, and perhaps hourly, occasion to confirm it. The most experienced, painstaking, and really skilful man among us is best assured of this fact. And no one who has taken the *rôle* of patient under this method of treatment will testify against it.

It is a trite saying, that "Homeopathy answers very well for women and children when they are ill." So it does. The experiment has been tried on a magnificent scale. And the result is, that it would be as difficult to destroy the public confidence in this system of medical practice as it would be to annihilate either of the more popular branches of the church militant. In short, it would be an impossibility. All the laws enacted by all the medical Sanhedrims in Christendom; all the opposition and ridicule of those who assume to control the rights and subsidize the resources of the Healing Art, would avail nothing against the settled reliance of the women of this and other countries upon the merits of homœopathy. And, if *they* are for us, *who* can be against us?

Even in quiet old Boston, something may have been said in these latter days concerning the rights of Women. It is al-

together probable that the most polite ears are familiar with the cruel complaints of this much-abused class. In the modest little city of Chicago, the most Herculean efforts are making to secure to the gentler sex those inalienable rights which hitherto have been denied. The most marvellous tact, and the most unmistakable talent are laid under contribution therefor. Our politicians have been outwitted by these invincible champions of reform; our clergymen compelled to listen to their homilies; and our physicians put upon the most unpalatable diet, and even threatened with a loss of their occupation, if they decline to acquiesce in the movement! To our chagrin and discomfiture we have been told that man has done little or nothing for the elevation of Woman; that we have trampled her rights under our feet; that our sympathies have gone astray; and, in brief, that we are sadly demoralized, and fallen from our proper estate.

But, while it must be acknowledged that too much of this is true, and inasmuch as it cannot be doubted that the reaction will prove wholesome to society at large, I apprehend that an exception should be made in favor of the members of this Institute, and of their professional brethren. The doctor, at least, should be exempted from this wholesome denunciation. For, from time immemorial, has he not labored for the well being of woman especially? To whose comfort does he aim to contribute most frequently and assiduously? Whose servant is he in sunshine and in storm, by day and by night, unceasingly? For whose benefit have his noblest efforts been put forth? Who shares most largely of the fruits of his professional toil? Who averts the contingencies of youth and maturity, of maternity and old age, for her sake and her safety? Who is it that constitutes a species of sub-Providence, and ministers to her welfare in a thousand little ways of which she knows — and too often cares — nothing? Who conducts away the harmful agencies that endanger the health of the household? Whose genius and appli-

cation has brought out and wrought out almost all of those expedients which, in her case, are only curative and salutary? From Hippocrates to Hahneman, from good old Ambrose Paré to the last alumnus in Medicine, it has been the chief mission of medical men to protect and preserve her health as a necessary condition to her happiness and her usefulness.

And, if the profession in general should be accredited with so much of good, it must be conceded that our especial branch thereof has additional and peculiar claims upon the sex. For it is no trifling advantage to have turned the tide of popular opinion in this and every other community against the pernicious habit of overdosing and maltreating our female patients. Homœopathy has initiated a reform that will tell with wonderful effect upon the well-being of coming generations. It has already lifted a burden from multitudes who either do not know, or will not acknowledge, to what agency they owe their emancipation. For the most harmful and disagreeable remedies, it has substituted those which are kindly and beneficent, such as are most useful, available, and never injurious. The adaptability of its laws and means is marvellous; and, in the direction indicated, no one may catalogue all its merits.

We do well to reward the man who invents whatever is adapted to lessen the toil and lighten the cares of woman. The hum of the sewing-machine is a hymn in praise of his genius and of his humanity. But which is the more noble and useful to the wife or mother, to add a thousand superfluous stitches to her garments, or to take away a single one from her side, when she is in pain and peril?

Is it more commendable in the merchant to multiply her wants and caprices, by bringing all that the Old World can furnish to adorn her home and her person, than for the physician to develop and render available a new world of curative resources, of which she will surely stand in need?

Which could she best spare, the "priceless pearl of the deep,"

which merely heightens her charms, of the *Calcarea carbonica* the simple salt that is derived from the oyster-shell?

The value of all the lace that was ever manufactured in Belgium and out of it, is not to be compared with that of a few drops of *Lachesis*. I have seen a vial of pellets which, if it could not be duplicated, would not be exchanged for anything in the world besides. And there are myriads of these little vials with equally valuable contents, extant to-day. Incredible as it may seem, there are not a few excellent women "out West" who would consider their houses only half-furnished without them. And "to this complexion has it come at last," that a lady in Cheyenne actually proposed to give her mirror for a miniature bottle of *Belladonna*.

Among the Kereks, a tribe of Arabs, when a man's wife is ill he sends her back to her parents, with the message that he paid for a healthy woman, and cannot bear the expense of an invalid. If this custom had prevailed among us, it would be difficult to estimate the number of American families that had been preserved intact through the agency of Homœopathic remedies! We may not possess a certain prophylactic against the spread of the divorce epidemic, but it must be true that our small-arms have served to keep some of the enemies of domestic peace and tranquility at bay.

It is scarcely possible to refer to a more striking instance of the influence and utility of medical reform, than we find in the history of domestic works upon homœopathy. It is true that the period in which these books acted as pioneers for the system, or sole representatives for physicians in remote neighborhoods, is fast passing away. But the good they have accomplished remains. The efforts to simplify the art of prescribing, to impress the most important rules of hygiene, to promote self-culture in all matters of health, and self-preservation by the exclusion of harmful medicaments, was a remarkable and almost unparalleled success. By the Divine blessing, in the hands of

intelligent women these instrumentalities were and are wonderfully efficacious. In the depth of the night, in the sorest extremity, when other means had failed, and help from the living counsellor was not available, these semi-official and silent physicians, these dumb doctors, have pointed out the remedy and frequently saved life. I need not tell you that the authors of these works have been canonized by general consent. The names of Hering and Pulte, of Hull and Marcy, of Guernsey and Tarbell, of Small and Freiligh, of Shipman and Douglas, are household words the world over, and in not a few instances their volumes outrank the Old Testament Commentaries. "They builded better than they knew." They have sown good seed in good soil, and the harvest of blessing to suffering humanity is at hand.

Let me remind you of the important relation existing between women and homœopathy, in this matter of domestic practice. If this system of treatment had not been especially adapted to her needs and susceptibilities; easy of application and prompt in its effects; simple and harmless, but almost magical in its results, and of unquestionable utility; a ready and reliable resource, she would never have given it the sanction of her choice and her confidence. No sensible mother would indorse a method of cure which was not as appropriate for her child as for herself, and *vice versa*. And every earnest woman would include her father, brother, husband or lover, or all these in the same list.

Given this demonstration, and the result is easily foretold. When the proposed reform had been put to this proof, its apostles were forthcoming. If homœopathy had not been suited to the relief of our physical infirmities, even when applied by laymen, and the women had not become its champions, its unbounded popularity would not be a matter of fact as well as of history, and we should not have been here this evening in the capacity of an national body of homeopathic physicians.

I know there are those in our ranks who are disposed to

place a low estimate on the value of domestic medicine. And they are partly in the right. It is mortifying to our pride in medical science to be forced to compete with those who rely exclusively, for their means of curing disease, upon a book-and-case education, and traditional expedients. We may not feel inclined to fraternize with those who know little or nothing of the conditions and laws of life, but who nevertheless assume to practice the healing art. It is true that homœopathy has sometimes been sadly misrepresented through this short-hand method of making every one his own physician. But, however objectionable in some of its features, this system has its compensating advantages. Many a woman, armed with her little stock of remedies, has converted an entire community. The globules have finally insinuated themselves into the throats and affections of the people, because she first took them herself, and then commended them to others. These forerunners have given us a foothold. As pioneers, they anticipated and opened the way for the more modern and thorough-bred practitioner. Because we are advanced in knowledge, it does not become us to denounce and discard whatever has served to help us forward in our acquisitions. While there are pupils, there will be need of primers.

However numerous and well-sustained the public hospitals, does any one suppose that all "the Lord's sick poor" find admission to them and relief through them? By no means. These incorporations do not render a thousandth part of the services received by this large and constantly increasing class. In every large community, the real almoners are the laymen who prescribe for the needy, as well as supply them with food and medicines. The women, who form the most efficient boards of managers, and who, in our day especially, are at the foundation of every charitable enterprise, are most of them armed *cap-à pie* with our remedies; or, what is equivalent, they know where to get them, and how to give them. These women are educating

the lower orders of society to the point of appreciating and of adopting a better method of cure, and eventually the whole mass will be leavened.

It may appear cruel that the ladies should labor to deprive our antiquated brethren of the privilege of treating the servants in our best families when they are ill; but they know, and everybody knows, that homœopathy is making fearful inroads upon the affections of this class of patients also. "Like mistress like maid." Beginning with the upper circles, the benefits of this new and safer method of treatment are certain to reach down to those which are less favored by fortune and circumstance.

Each little case that these women carry, is a lever that will elevate the system into notice. Every prescription they make is an appeal to the sensibilities and reason of the poor invalid. In their errands of mercy, they deal with the hidden forces of the common-health and the common-wealth,—which are really identical. They plant blessings that will bloom in the by-ways of the city and of the country, and that will bear fruit which is literally for the healing of the nations.

But another train of influences is at work to develop and perfect the mutual relations existing between woman and homœopathy. I allude to the popular study of the sciences collateral to medicine. There was never a period in which these branches attracted so much attention, or when the people were so inquisitive and so well-informed concerning them. The ladies, especially, are exceedingly interested in whatever pertains to anatomy, physiology, and animal chemistry. The schools and seminaries afford them better facilities for the study of these subjects than some of us enjoyed, a few years ago, in our medical colleges. And not a few of them are more conversant with the principles and laws that underlie these sciences, and with their structural and functional details also, than the doctors who prescribe for them, and who assume so much knowledge.

Nor is this a mere ornamental department of modern education. Circumstances may compel the young lady-graduate to forego her music, and to forget her French; but not so with the study and appreciation of the branches named. She can never go or live where the beautiful harp of life may not and will not be played upon. The universal language of functional activity will be spoken through her own perceptions, at every turn, and under all circumstances.

There is no variety of information which is more useful and available to the sex and the species. Daily experience will multiply the opportunities for thought and reflection upon matters that especially concern her physical welfare and happiness. Our common every-day life is crowded with incidents that illustrate this fact. Its physiological basis is the foundation of health for the healthy, of help to the needy, and of hope for the hopeless.

Why, then, should there not be a general search after, and desire for, this knowledge? Why should not the popular pulse beat more quickly at the prospect of such an inheritance? And why should not the periodical press give especial prominence to these subjects, and lectures and addresses on science for the family and the fireside run through as many editions as there are days in a week or months in a year? Is Dickens more suggestive than Draper, or Lytton Bulwer than Baron Liebig?

It is a most encouraging sign of the times in which we live, that we can scarcely take up a current magazine that does not contain one or more papers upon hygiene, or some kindred topic. And it is equally significant that many of these chapters are written by well-known physicians of both schools of medical practice. For it is no longer considered unprofessional and impolitic to employ the secular press in educating the people upon these subjects. Indeed, it has become a legitimate duty and privilege to contribute in this manner to the general interest and enlightenment. The doctors themselves are learning

and realizing that they can perhaps accomplish as much for humanity out of the sick room as in it; and that all of their mission is not included in the mere prescription of remedies *secundum artem*.

Every list of new books includes one or more volumes that elaborate and apply this knowledge to the improvement of the physical condition of man, and the prevention of disease. Lessons upon the concomitants and contingencies of health are free as water. They are the thread upon which some of our best romances are strung. They tinge the sermons we hear, and the songs we sing. They stamp their impress upon the documents of the diplomatist, and crop out in every friendly circle. They creep into the school-boy's satchel, and cram the mail-bags to overflowing. To remain ignorant of their teachings is inexcusable and mischievous.

It is possible, gentlemen of the Institute, that we do not fully realize the influence which this popular change has already exerted, and will continue to exert, for the recognition and renown of homœopathy. We, of all others, should be constant and determined in our efforts to educate the people in whatever concerns their physical welfare. For, the greater their knowledge of anatomy, physiology, histology, botany, chemistry, and natural history, the better will they be fitted to appreciate any and all advancement in medical science. The more one knows of the peculiarities and susceptibilities of his bodily organization, the less medicine he will take or give. Physiology and physic in the crude sense are incompatible. Examine the delicate structure of the stomach, its nerves and vessels, its glands and its cells, which are operated by a wonderful sympathy; exhibit its curious textures in the field of the microscope, and detail the functional processes by which they prepare the food for the needs of the organism, and, when your pupil has learned the lesson, will he permit you to dose him with drugs that would corrode a chemist's retort, or ruin a piece of

machinery? Such a view of the stomach would open the eyes of most persons to the cruelties practised upon that innocent organ, and, through it, upon the whole animal economy.

The instinct of the herbivorous animal prevents it from eating the poisonous plants that abound in the pasture. The instinct of the child warns it that the nauseous potion will be injurious. The sheep is as ignorant of botany as the baby is of pharmacy. It is "original sin" in the one case as much as in the other, that leads the creature to rebel against swallowing what is harmful.

Now these intuitive perceptions are much more acute and significant in woman than in the animal; in the wife than in her husband. They are more delicate because they stand guard for a more delicate and susceptible organism. They are like the little cilia which keep the dust from our lungs,—invisible, but indispensable. They supply a condition which is necessary to medical progress. For they represent a faculty that is capable of culture and development. Instinct and intelligence are the hinges upon which the prosperity of our school must turn. And they are mutually requisite to, and responsible for, the popularity of the homœopathic system of treatment.

In woman, we find this faculty sometimes developed in a remarkable degree. She is usually the first to recognize and to call attention to the merits of homœopathy. She tests it upon herself, or upon her children, in an empirical, doubting way. Her instincts have been disgusted with the old and more familiar method, and perhaps she has taken its drugs under protest. She tries the new system with as many misgivings as Jenner may have had in vaccinating his own son. But the result is all that she could hope. Quietly, and without any risk or perturbation, with no fret or friction of the delicate machinery, her health is restored. She has learned a lesson in the school of experience. And it will not be lost upon her. A man, leaving a sick-bed for the whirl of business, to be caught in the mael-

strom of politics, or immersed in the affairs of church or state, would be as apt to forget the doctor, and what he had accomplished for his relief, as the most of us are to lose sight of Providence. But not so with woman. Her perceptions are on the alert. She catches a gleam of truth, and her tact enables her to employ it to advantage. If other members of her family, or some of her friends, are taken ill, she advises a trial of the remedies which acted so promptly and efficiently in her own case. They are successful. Her friend is cured, and her faith is confirmed. She reflects, investigates, proselytes.

This is the chronological order of events in the conversion of the people to our form of medical practice. The mental tentacles of our mothers and wives and sisters are on the *qui vive* for harmful agencies of all kinds. But they are equally alert in recognizing a friend and in detecting an enemy to the wonderful organism, or encampment, for which they stand sentinels. And it is because our system of cure is grateful to these perceptions that it passes the guard, and gains a hearing. The subsequent steps are easy. They include experiment, analysis, induction and adoption. First we have the facts, and then the philosophy; first patients, then patrons, and then apostles.

It is by such delicate hands that the seeds of confidence in this method of treatment are first sown. A thousand contingencies cluster about their germination and subsequent growth. The soil is sometimes unsuited, the season unpropitious, or the field may be choked with the weeds of ignorance and prejudice, or drenched with the muddy torrent of misrepresentation. But, under more favorable circumstances, the silent forces within the seed are operating in unison with the soil and the sun, to rear the plant and to ripen the harvest.

Through a trick of legislation, the representatives of our school of medicine were generally excluded from the army service. The soldiers suffered, but the system gained greatly in consequence. While others were "scrambling for rank and pay,

like apes for nuts," we were left to look after the families of the heroes who were doing battle for the nation. Our professional responsibility and reputation were doubled thereby. As a result of the intolerance that kept us from the field and hospital, homœopathy found favor where, otherwise, it had never been tested. The mothers tried it, and adopted it at home. The fathers and sons became disgusted with the old treatment while absent, and multitudes of zealous partisans flocked to our standard. It was thus that what had been designed to crush the life out of our cause, really contributed to its prosperity and popularity. If we failed to obtain our rights from the surgical boards in the several States, we did not fail of a representation in the management of the grandest sanitary enterprise that was ever put into operation beneath the sun. And, when there were ten women for us to every man who arrayed himself against us, we could survive such an indignity; we could afford to labor and to wait.

In this indorsement of homœopathy by the best women in society, there is a moral power, which, like the magnet, gains strength by the weight that it carries. They may not pause to cipher out questions of medical casuistry, but their tact leads them to correct conclusions, and their tenacity holds them there. In whatever they uphold, the conscientious and intelligent adherence of this class of persons affords the best criterion of character. Without it, we should have failed; but with it, we shall certainly prosper.

But there are graver questions that grow out of this natural relation between woman and homœopathy. The line which separates tact from talent, is an indistinct and arbitrary one. If she have the taste and the genius for it, is there any good reason why a woman may not properly qualify herself for the practice of medicine? Shall we recognize the peculiar gifts of which I have spoken, place a premium on their possession and exercise, and afterwards seek to limit her acquirements, and to narrow the field of her usefulness? Why restrict her inclina-

tion in the study of the collateral sciences? In exceptional cases, why may not her natural ability as a nurse be permitted to develop into that of the true physician? Are her intuitive perceptions in the way? Will they prove a necessary obstacle to the skilful employment of remedies? Because she discerns more quickly and delicately than her brother, does it follow that she would prescribe less accurately and successfully? Are we prepared to admit that the more obtuse the doctor's perceptions, the better his diagnosis? The more slow and difficult his analysis of a given case, the better his recipe?

It certainly does not follow, that, because her faculties permit her to recognize, and prompt her to recommend, the best method of treatment, therefore she shall be gifted with the ability to employ it, and to dictate its details to the best advantage. Multitudes of women preach homœopathy most successfully, who, no matter what their advantages, would as signally fail in its general practice. In either sex, the possession of one talent does not imply the possession of all. In our calling, as in others, real merit is not an affair of gender, but of genius and industry.

Now, there have always been, and there will always be, female physicians. And their tribe is as certain to increase as it is to exist. We are chiefly concerned with the kind and degree of their qualification for the responsible office. If the people will demand their services, we have the right to insist that they shall be educated and trained for this particular function. And this more especially because we will be expected, and even forced, to fraternize with them. However ignorant or intelligent, they will be regarded as types of our class, or, if you please, as "representative men."

It is an error to suppose, that, the more intelligent and influential men in our ranks would if they could, really prevent women as a class from engaging in the practice of medicine. On the contrary, we perceive and admit the probability of their

usefulness in such a capacity. There is room and employment for all, and each should be occupied according to his or her gifts. Instead of opposing the sex in this direction, we simply recommend that they shall avail themselves of a thorough course of training for the duties assumed.

If it tries our temper to counsel with a *man* whose wits and wisdom are not equal to a professional emergency, and who has called us for denominational reasons, it is even more provoking to advise with a *woman* whose tact and learning are both at fault under similar circumstances. For her failure is more disastrous to herself and all concerned. The injury that she inflicts through ignorance will be in ratio with her influence as a woman.

It is not my purpose to institute a comparison between the sexes, as to their relative skill and reputation as physicians. In this, as in other pursuits, the doors are now open to healthful emulation and competition. For the past, however, the only marvel is, that, with so many obstacles in her path, woman has accomplished so much in the direction indicated. We cannot resist the conclusion that if, with all her lack of opportunities, nay, her positive hinderances, she has thus "put to usury" her one talent, she might safely be intrusted with three, or more.

Therefore, gentlemen of the Institute, while we are striving by every laudable means to raise the grade of qualification, we must help to elevate it for both sexes alike. We should recognize and encourage those medical schools which are now devoted to the education of women, and organize, endow, and support others, as they may be demanded by the growing popularity of our cause. And we should also labor to form a correct public sentiment which will require that all physicians, without any arbitrary distinction of sex, or color, or nationality, shall have been thoroughly educated and disciplined for their peculiar and responsible calling.

These, and kindred considerations which might be adduced

should lift us to the broad level of professional equality, liberality, and toleration. If the half that I have said of the peculiar relations of women to homœopathy is true, we are morally bound to minister by every possible means to the cultivation of those qualities of mind and heart which are suited to adorn our own or any other calling.

While the women introduce and defend us; while they intrust to our care and keeping their own lives, and those of others who are endeared to them by the ties of love and of friendship; while they continue to be the first to praise and appreciate, and the last to forget what we have done for them; while they throw their tact and influence and intelligence into the scale for us; while they hold up our hands at home and abroad; and while, in this or other cities, they raise and contribute thousands upon thousands of dollars to extend a knowledge of homœopathy, and impart its curative blessings to the poor and needy, we should frankly confess that this is our sweetest recompense, and our most lasting and grateful reward.

